

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 TEHRAN 10619

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, IR

SUBJ: IRANIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS U.S. PARTICIPATION IN

GOI MILITARY BUILDUP

SUMMARY: WE HAVE ATTEMPTED TO EVALUATE HOW EDUCATED IRANIANS VIEW THE GROWING PRESENCE OF AMERICAN MILITARY AND CIVILIAN EXPERTS INVOLVED IN THE LARGE-SCALE EXPANSION AND MODERNIZATION OF IRANIAN ARMED FORCES (IIA). WHAT DO WE FACE: AN INCREASE IN NATIONALISTIC GRUMBLING, A MARKED RISE IN CULTURAL/PERSONAL FRICTIONS BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS, OR A CAMPAIGN THAT INCLUDES VIOLENT ACTION LED BY TERRORISTS OR STUDENTS AND OTHER POLITICAL DISSIDENTS? AS BEST WE CAN DETERMINE, LARGE MASS OF LOCAL OPINION IS INDIFFERENT OR ONLY VAGUELY CONCERNED ON ISSUE OF IIA BUILDUP AND OSTENSIBLY RECONCILED TO INFUX OF FOREIGN TECHNICIANS. AT UPPER, OR LEADERSHIP, END OF SOCIAL/POLITICAL SPECTRUM THERE IS VERY POSITIVE DESIRE FOR FOREIGN EXPERTISE. AT LOWER END (SOME STUDENTS) THERE IS SOME HOSTILITY. ALTHOUGH RESENTMENT MAY GROW WITH ENLARGEMENT OF FOREIGN COMMUNITY, WE DO NOT FORESEE A SERIOUS AND ORGANIZED DIRECT THREAT TO U.S. PRESENCE AND DO NOT BELIEVE WE SHOULD UNDULY INHIBIT ESSENTIAL RPT ESSENTIAL DEFENSE-RELATED ACTIVITIES IN

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IRAN IN FEAR OF POPULAR REACTION. BUT IRAN IS NOT TEXAS

AND WE AND GOI COULD HAVE DIFFICULTIES IF LATENT ANTAGONISM COMES TO FORE AS AN ASPECT OF BROADER POPULAR DISCONTENT. ACCORDINGLY, WE SHOULD NOT ENLARGE OR ACTIVATE PROGRAMS WHICH ARE MERELY A CONVENIENCE TO US AND WHICH ARE JUSTIFIED ON GROUNDS THAT GOI WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION. WE MIGHT SOME DAY HAVE TO DEAL WITH CHANGES IN ATTITUDES OF IRANIAN PUBLIC. END SUMMARY.

1. INTRODUCTION. GOI MILITARY BUDGET THIS YEAR IS ESTIMATED AT ABOUT \$6.5 BILLION, OVER ONE-QUARTER OF TOTAL GOI OUTLAYS. NEXT YEAR'S DEFENSE COSTS ARE SET AT \$9.3 BILLION IN TOTAL BUDGET OF \$26.5 BILLION. WE ANTICIPATE THAT THIS FIGURE WILL REPRESENT A HIGH POINT AND THAT DEFENSE EXPENDITURES WILL BEGIN TO LEVEL OFF THEREAFTER. TO SUPPORT INITIAL DELIVERIES OF ORDERS FOR U.S. EQUIPMENT WORTH OVER \$8 BILLION, THERE ARE OVER 1,000 AMERICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL AND 1,900 CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES OF DEFENSE-RELATED FIRMS CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN IIA MODERNIZATION AND ENLARGEMENT. WHILE OUR OFFICIAL COMMUNITY WILL REMAIN FAIRLY STABLE, WE PROJECT NUMBER OF DEFENSE CONTRACTOR PERSONNEL TO RISE TO ABOUT 12,000 PRINCIPALS BY 1980. WE ESTIMATE THERE ARE NOW SOME 16,000 AMERICANS RESIDENT IN IRAN, APPROXIMATELY 13,000 OF WHOM LIVE IN TEHRAN, A CITY OF ABOUT 3.5 MILLION. GERMAN, BRITISH AND RUSSIAN COMMUNITIES NOW TOTAL ABOUT 5,000 PERSONS EACH; FRENCH, JAPANESE AND ITALIANS HAVE SMALLER GROUPS. ALL OF THESE FIGURES WILL BE SUBSTANTIALLY ENLARGED BY GOI'S PURCHASE OF EXPERTISE FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.

2. WE HAVE SOUGHT TO ANALYZE WHAT THIS EXPANSION IN U.S. POPULATION, ESPECIALLY IN MOST VISIBLE AND CONTROVERSIAL DEFENSE-RELATED GROUPS, MIGHT MEAN FOR U.S. POSITION IN IRAN. OBVIOUSLY, THIS IS A VERY NEBULOUS SUBJECT, BUT ALSO AN IMPORTANT MATTER THAT MERITS CONTINUING EXAMINATION. WE ARE CONCERNED IN THIS REPORT WITH EDUCATED IRANIANS, A MINORITY OF ABOUT 15 PER CENT, WHO WILL BE MOST AFFECTED BY FOREIGN PRESENCE AND MOST AWARE OF IMPLICATIONS OF MILITARY BUILDUP. WE ARE NOT DISCUSSING HERE MAJORITY OF BAZAAR-CONNECTED IRANIANS WHO ARE DEEPLY

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RELIGIOUS, LARGELY CONSERVATIVE IN SOCIAL ORIENTATION AND ALSO GENERALLY ANTI-FOREIGN IN OUTLOOK. OUR IMPRESSION, HOWEVER, IS THAT IN THIS NATION OF MANY "NEW RICH", THERE IS A CONTINUING EXCHANGE OF VIEWS BETWEEN EDUCATED AND BAZAAR CLASSES. THERE IS NO REAL COMMUNICATIONS GAP BETWEEN CLASSES; BOTH BAZAARIS AND EDUCATED ELITES ARE WELL AWARE OF ATTITUDES OF OTHER GROUP.

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND. ALTHOUGH MODERN-DAY NATIONALISM IN IRAN REALLY BEGAN WITH ANTI-BRITISH TOBACCO PROTEST OF 1891, AND BRITISH AND RUSSIAN INTERFERENCE IN PRE-REZA SHAH IRAN AND THEIR 1941 INVASION CAN STILL ACTIVATE STRONG EMOTIONS, THERE IS NO RECENT HISTORY OF SERIOUS XENOPHOBIA IN IRAN. IRAN HAS NO COLONIAL PAST AND FEW OF THE DERIVATIVE INTELLECTUAL HANG-UPS OF OF SOME OF ITS NEIGHBORS. IT HAS NO EXPERIENCE TO COMPARE WITH ANTI-BRITISH RIOTS OF EGYPT OR INDIA. IRANIANS DO NOT SHARE THE DISDAINFUL ATTITUDE TOWARDS OUTSIDERS OF SAUDI ARABIA AND CONSERVATIVE ARAB STATES. WHEN IRANIANS HAVE BEEN UNHAPPY WITH FOREIGNERS, A OVER OIL INEARLY FIFTIES AND U.S. MILITARY LEGAL STATUS IN 1964, THEIR PRINCIPAL TARGET HAS BEEN GOI, NOT FOREIGNERS.

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4. IT IS HARD TO GENERALIZE ON ACTUAL IRANIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS AMERICANS. ON ONE HAND, THERE ARE LONG LINES AT OUR VISA OFFICE AND AMERICAN LIFE STYLES ARE EVERYWHERE IMITATED. ON OTHER HAND, RELATIVELY FEW AMERICANS HAVE CLOSE IRANIAN FRIENDS, MAINLY BECAUSE IRANIANS DO NOT SEEK TIES OUTSIDE TRADITIONAL EXTENDED FAMILY CIRCLE. ATTITUDES TOWARDS FOREIGNERS ARE FURTHER OBSCURED BY RELIGIOUS APPROVAL OF DISSEMBLING ("TAGIYEH"), TRADITION OF HOSPITALITY TOWARDS GUESTS, RECOGNITION OF SHORTAGE OF SKILLED MANPOWER AND THAT FOREIGN EXPERTISE

IS ESSENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT, AND FIRM GOI POLICE CONTROL. THUS, AMBIVALENCE BEHIND APPARENTLY ACCOMMODATING IRANIAN ATTITUDES SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN. AS ONE CYNICAL JOURNALIST HALF JOKINGLY TOLD US, "WE WELCOMED GENGHIS KHAN, BUT WE WERE NEVER FRIENDS. IT IS THE SAME WITH YOU".

5. ATTITUDES:

A. LEADERSHIP. SHAH HAS PLAINLY STATED HE WELCOMES U.S. EXPERTISE, NOT ONLY FOR ITS TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS, BUT BECAUSE OUR APPROACH TO HARD WORK CAN BE SALUTARY EXAMPLE FOR IRANIAN TRAINEES. HIS SUBORDINATES AGREE, SOMEWHAT DEFENSIVELY, THAT IF IRAN IS TO MAKE RAPID PROGRESS, IT MUST IMPORT SKILLS. PRIVATELY, THESE
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OFFICIALS DISMISS ANY POSSIBILITY OF LARGE-SCALE XENOPHOBIC REACTION. ADHERING TO SHAH'S GUIDANCE, IRANIAN LEADERS ARE CARRYING OUT POLICY OF LARGE-SCALE INJECTION OF FOREIGN EXPERTS OVER SHORT PERIOD, RATHER THAN MORE CONSERVATIVE APPROACH OF FEWER OUTSIDERS OVER LONG PERIOD AS IRANIANS ARE TRAINED. PROBLEMS MAY ARISE IF IT BECOMES APPARENT THAT LARGE FOREIGN PRESENCE WILL BE NEEDED FOR MUCH LONGER PERIOD OF TIME THAN ORIGINALLY ANTICIPATED.

B. MILITARY. IN OUR EXPERIENCE MILITARY OFFICERS ALMOST NEVER TAKE A POSITION QUESTIONING A BASIC POLICY OF IRAN'S NATIONAL LEADERSHIP. THEREFORE, NO MATTER WHAT INDIVIDUAL OFFICERS' TRUE OPINIONS MIGHT BE, WE SHOULD NOT EXPECT AN OPENLY UNFRIENDLY ATTITUDE TOWARDS U.S. ADVISORS AND TECHNICIANS. MAJORITY MILITARY OPINION, WE BELIEVE, IS SINCERELY SUPPORTIVE OF U.S. ROLE. U.S. PRESENCE HAS PRACTICAL UTILITY FOR IRANIAN OFFICERS. AMERICANS CAN HANDLE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS FOR WHICH IRANIANS ARE NOT QUALIFIED OR WHICH MIGHT INVOLVE AN IRANIAN IN UNPLEASANT CONTROVERSY. U.S. ADVISORS OFTEN ACT AS A BUFFER IN THIS WAY OR SUPPLY NEGATIVE RESPONSE WHICH AN IRANIAN MIGHT LACK COURAGE TO ASSERT. NATURAL, HONEST ATTITUDE OF AMERICANS IS ALSO MORE TO IRANIAN TASTES THAN SUPERIOR AIRS OF BRITISH AND FRENCH. ATTITUDES ARE NOT COMPLETELY UNCRITICAL, HOWEVER. WE HAVE ALSO NOTICED TENDENCY AMONG SOME IRANIAN OFFICERS TO RESENT U.S. ADVICE, PARTICULARLY WHEN IT IS VOLUNTEERED, ON GROUNDS THAT IRAN HAS HAD SUFFICIENT U.S. TRAINING AND IS NOW EXPERIENCED AND ABLE TO MAKE INDEPENDENT DECISIONS. NEW SELF-CONFIDENCE ARISING FROM OIL WEALTH AND EXPERIENCE SOMETIMES GIVES THIS ATTITUDE A TINGE OF ARROGANCE. ALL TOO FREQUENTLY THIS CONFIDENCE IS BASED ON ASSUMED, RATHER THAN ACTUAL, EXPERTISE. THERE IS A FEELING THAT "WE KNOW THE TECHNICAL SERVICES WE REQUIRE AND CAN BUY

THEM IF WE CHOOSE". THIS ACCOUNTS FOR GENERAL POPULARITY OF FULLY GOI-FINANCED TAFT PROGRAM. IT IS COMPLEMENTED BY ATTITUDE THAT BEST EXPERIENCE FOR IRANIANS IS TO VISIT U.S. UNITS AND, USING IRANIAN STANDARDS, SELECT THOSE ASPECTS OF U.S. OPERATIONS WHICH CAN WORK IN IRAN. IN SUMMARY, THERE IS TENDENCY TO SAY, "DON'T TELL US WHAT TO DO; SHOW US WHAT YOU HAVE AND LET US DECIDE WHAT WE CONFIDENTIAL

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NEED".

C. CIVILIAN. SOME EDUCATED IRANIANS QUESTION NEED FOR GOI'S MILITARY BUILDUP AND IMPLICATIONS OF OUR PARTICIPATION IN IT. FEW SEEM EXCITED BY IRAN'S CHANGING FOREIGN RELATIONS OR ITS ROLE IN REGIONAL SECURITY MATTERS; CRITICISM NORMALLY STEMS FROM CONCERN FOR POSSIBLE EFFECTS ON IRAN'S DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT. ALTHOUGH "GUNS OR BUTTER" IS NOT A DEBATE IN FINANCIAL TERMS, IT IS A CONCERN FROM STANDPOINT OF PRIORITIES FOR PUBLIC WORKS AND UTILIZATION OF LIMITED SKILLED MANPOWER. THESE MISGIVINGS ARE GENERALLY NOT GIVEN CONCRETE OR OPEN FORMULATION, HOWEVER, AND MOST CRITICS SEEM PREPARED TO REMAIN QUIET AS LONG AS THEY THEMSELVES BENEFIT FROM IRAN'S BURGEONING REVENUES. THERE IS A SERIOUS SKILLED MANAGEMENT SHORTAGE AND IT IS CLEAR TO MOST IRANIANS THAT IMPORTED FOREIGNERS ARE NOT TAKING JOBS FROM THEM. SOME BUSINESSMEN ARE ACTIVE SUPPORTERS OF IIA BUILDUP AS IMPORTANT SOURCE OF INCOME. DURING LAST YEAR'S CEMENT SHORTAGE, MANY ATTRIBUTED CAUSE TO MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, BUT FEW SEEMED SERIOUSLY AGGRIEVED.

WITH IRAN'S WEALTH OFFERING SO MANY OPPORTUNITIES, FEW FAMILIES WITH HOPE FOR SELF-ADVANCEMENT SELECT A MILITARY CAREER FOR THEIR SONS. DRAFT IS UNIVERSALLY RESENTED AND AVOIDED WHERE POSSIBLE. SOME STUDENT GROUPINGS, SUPPORTED BY THEIR PROFESSORS, STRONGLY OBJECT TO MILITARY EXPENDITURES AND PRESENCE OF FOREIGNERS, BUT FOR POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY MOST OF THEM AND OTHERS IN OPPOSITION GENERALLY REMAIN PUBLICLY MUTE OR DISGUISE THEIR ATTITUDES.

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SIMILARLY, THERE HAVE BEEN CONTINUING PROBLEMS FROM SOME ABRASIVE AMERICAN TECHNICIANS IN CONSERVATIVE ISFAHAN, BUT INTERESTINGLY MOST COMPLAINTS TO US HAVE COME FROM AMERICAN OR FOREIGN, NOT IRANIAN, OBSERVERS. MOST CONSPICUOUS SIGN OF U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN TEHRAN IS AFRT. IT HAS QUESTIONABLE LEGAL STATUS, BUT ALMOST NEVER DO WE HEAR IT CRITICIZED. IT SEEMS TO BE ACCEPTED AS NORMAL COMPONENT OF U.S.A-IRANIAN MILITARY COOPERATION. (SINCE PREPARATION OF THIS CABLE, NIRT HAS INFORMALLY ASKED THAT WE CONSIDER GIVING IT ROLE IN AFRT OPERATIONS).

ONLY ACTIVE OPPOSITION TO U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE SEEMS TO BE CONSTITUTED BY SMALL TERRORIST GROUPS WHICH PERIODICALLY DETONATE BOMBS AND COMMIT OTHER ACTS OF VIOLENCE. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, THESE LIMITED ACTIVITIES GENERATE LITTLE SYMPATHY WITH IRANIAN PUBLIC. IN SUMMARY, TO AVERAGE EDUCATED IRANIAN, HOW GOI HANDLES IIA BUILDUP IS FAR BEYOND HIS KNOWLEDGE AND POWER TO INFLUENCE. HE APPEARS NOT TO FEEL HIS INTERESTS DIRECTLY ENGAGED AS LONG AS HE IS DOING WELL ECONOMICALLY.

6. RESPONSE OF GOI TO PUBLIC ATTITUDES. DESPITE ITS AUTHORITARIAN CHARACTER, GOI LISTENS TO ITS PUBLIC AND REACTS, AT LEAST WITH RHETORIC BUT INCREASINGLY WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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SOME SUBSTANCE, TO HEAD OFF PROBLEMS. RECENT MEASURES AGAINST INFLATION AND FOR EDUCATION AND HEALTH ARE EXAMPLES. GROWING FOREIGN PRESENCE IS NOT DISCUSSED PUBLICLY BY GOI, BUT INSTEAD EMPHASIS IS PUT ON HIRING

AND TRAINING IRANIANS. SIMILAR EFFORTS ARE BEING MADE ON MILITARY ISSUES: DRAFT RELIEF FOR STUDENTS, BIG PR CAMPAIGN FOR NAVY AND ARMY DAYS. HOWEVER, ON KEY ISSUES SUCH AS MILITARY BUILDUP WITH FOREIGN ASSISTANCE, GOI DOES NOT TAKE ITS LEAD FROM PUBLIC OPINION AND, WE EXPECT, WOULD PERSIST WITH EXISTING POLICIES EVEN IN FACE OF GREATER OPPOSITION.

7. OUTLOOK. WE BELIEVE LATENT ANTI-FOREIGN FEELINGS WILL SLOWLY GROW STRONGER AS NUMBER OF FOREIGN EXPERTS INCREASES. SOME MORE FISTICUFFS AND FAR MORE SQUABBLING WITH AUTO DRIVERS, LANDLORDS AND SHOPKEEPERS ARE NATURALLY TO BE EXPECTED. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT SEE IMMINENT DANGER OF DIRECT IRANIAN/FOREIGN CONFRONTATIONS SUCH AS ORGANIZED AND RECURRING PHYSICAL ATTACKS OR WIDESPREAD AND OPEN CRITICISM. PROSPECT IS THAT ATTITUDES TOWARD IIA BUILDUP AND FOREIGN EXPERTS WILL BE ADDED TO LIST OF GRIEVANCES AGAINST REGIME, CERTAINLY LOWER ON SCALE THAN SUCH PROBLEMS AS INFLATION, CORRUPTION, SLOWNESS OR INEPTITUDE IN USING OIL MONEY FOR SOCIAL SRVICES, AND LAC OF PLITICAL FREEDOM. IF GOI CAN KEEP PUBLIC RELATIVELY SATISFIED ON THOSE PROBLEMS, IT SHOULD ANTICIPATE NO SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES ON MILITARY POLICY ISSUES. GREATER OPENING FOR STRONG PUBLIC ATTITUDES COULD COME, HOWEVER, SHOULD GOI INTENTIONALLY OR UNINTENTIONALLY FOSTER ANTI-WESTERN SENTIMENT OVER OIL PRICE ISSUE. IF EDUCATED ELITES SHOULD ADOPT ANTI-WESTERN POSITION PUBLICLY, WE MAY ANTICIPATE THEY WILL HAVE LARGE FOLLOWING AMONG BAZAAR CLASSES.

8. IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. PRESENT ATTITUDES AND OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE SUGGEST THAT WE SHOULD NOT BE RELUCTANT TO PURSUE PROGRAMS CALLING FOR MORE AMERICANS IN IRAN WHEN THEY ARE JUDGED TO BE NECESSARY FOR IMPORTANT U.S. INTERESTS AND TIES WITH GOI. HOWEVER, SOLID AS THE GROUND MAY APPEAR, THERE ARE SOFT SPOTS WHICH ARE VERY HARD TO ASSESS. THERE ARE REPRESSED NATIONAL
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SENSITIVITIES HERE WHICH ARE NOT FAVORABLE TO EXPANDED U.S. PRESENCE. WE SHOULD DO NOTHING TO AGGRAVATE SUCH TENDENCIES, I.E., WE SHOULD DO NOTHING THAT IS NOT TRULY ESSENTIAL FOR OUR MILITARY INTERESTS. THAT MEANS FEWER BOONDOGLING VISITORS, NO UNNECESSARY OFFICIAL OR PRIVATE PERSONNEL ASSIGNED HERE, AND NO PROGRAMS THAT MERELY SEEM CONVENIENT IN IRAN'S APPARENTLY FAVORABLE ATMOSPHERE.
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